

## A STUDY OF THE FUNCTIONS OF THE OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA RECREATION DEPARTMENT

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### 1 Preface

Since the 1960's, Japan has accomplished rapid economic progress. As a result, compared with before, we Japanese have acquired leisure time and money which can be used to enjoy life, and our philosophy of living is rapidly changing.

Young people are changing rapidly, in their leisure activities especially. This means a changing idea of work. That is to say, "work to enjoy all living" is replacing "work to live". It is deeply concerned with self-realization. This point of view in community recreation is emphasized in Japan and it reflects a typical Japanese way of thinking.

The demands of community recreation in Japan are being given approval in these situations. And we are astonished by the large number of these activities in the United States where has been able to get a leisure-oriented society faster than Japan.

For Japanese community recreation, it is suggestive to identify the functions of the municipal recreation department in the United States.

### 2 Object and Methodology

This monograph's object was to describe the functions of the average American municipal recreation department. For this purpose, we considered the Oakland, California, Recreation Department, because: (a) Oakland has always been a national leader in its organization and function since its history had begun in 1907, (b) Oakland is average city in the United States.

The methodologies of attaining the object were as follows.

(1) Newspaper articles (mainly The Oakland Tribune)<sup>(1)</sup> that were available in the object.

(2) Administrative and training manuals, pamphlets, periodicals, books, and other materials that were generally available.

(3) Interviews with Special Events Coordinator, Mr. Burton Weber, and other staff/participants of the ORD, and Mrs. Jane E. McGuire<sup>(2)</sup>.

### 3 Brief History and Location of Oakland

The original site of Oakland was part of the holdings of Don Luis Maria Peralta<sup>(3)</sup>. He received vast grants from the Spanish Crown. He divided his lands among four sons in 1842. Moses Chase, one of his sons, leased a tract in 1850, and he had a role as the founder of Oakland. In May, 1852, Oakland was incorporated as a town, and was chartered as a city in 1854. The first mayor was Horace W. Carpentier. The name, Oakland, was suggested by the groves of oaks in which the first homes were built.

Oakland is located on the mainland side of San Francisco Bay. The metropolitan area

(Alameda County) extends for 23 miles along the San Francisco Bay eastward to the San Joaquin Valley, consisting of an almost unbroken chain of factories, waterfront industries, commercial trading centers, and residences. Neighbors are the cities of Albany, Berkeley, Piedmont, Alameda, San Leandro, Hayward, Union City, Newark, Fremont; and on the opposite side of the Bay Bridge is the city of San Francisco (Figure1).

Oakland covers a land area of 53.3 square miles and water area of 25.7 square miles<sup>(4)</sup>. Population is about 338,000. Even though it is true that Oakland is one of the most rapidly growing cities in California, she experienced a population loss between the 1950's and the 1960's as a typical "core" city in the United States.

Also, Oakland is changing in ethnic composition: many blacks and other newcomers have arrived from the South and other areas. They are replacing former middle-class whites who are moving to suburbs. In 1977, Oakland elected its first black mayor.

#### 4 The Basic Functions of Community Recreation in Oakland

Community recreation has some important functions for both individual and group or community. We can point out that the case of the ORD is a representative one in America. That is to say, the ORD has, at least, four basic functions, and these functions are divided into two categories: (1) functions of realizing community recreation; and (2) social or community functions.

##### (1) The functions of realizing community recreation in the ORD

The functions of realizing community recreation are divided into two levels; service function, and facility function.

##### (a) Service function

Just as it is the central function of all community recreation programs, the service function is, also, the central one in the ORD. That is to say, "what the each participant wants" is the most important base. This function includes, of course, minority groups and handicapped person in Oakland. In order to pursuit this base, the ORD is paying its effort to satisfy the participants' needs through a big variety recreational activities<sup>(5)</sup>.

##### (b) Facility function

The provision of facilities needs for every recreational activity. This function is a typical function of all recreation departments. In Oakland, the pursuit of this function is supported by the Charter of the City of Oakland, and others. The ORD has many kinds of facilities for recreation activities for all<sup>(6)</sup>.

##### (2) The social or community functions

The social or community functions are the important in the ORD. Especially, the complex population characteristics, like Oakland, results a lot of way of thinking and results the uncertainty of behavior in recreation activity. In the ORD, the social or community functions have two phases: control function; and "to make a good citizen" function.

##### (a) Control function

For "anti-social" behavior of participant, the ORD has the close cooperation of formal authoritative agencies such as the Oakland Police Department, the Alameda County Probation Department, the California Youth Authority, and other governmental units. The police man

is primarily called upon when there are or actual disturbances occurred.

(b) "To make a good citizen" function

An important function of community recreation is "to make a good citizen" in the ORD. This is based on "character-building" through a big variety of recreational programs; staff teach social norms and values such as sportsmanship, respect for facility, cooperation. Especially, in the case of complex population characteristics like Oakland, this function is placed on the municipal government itself.

Community integration through recreational activities refers to a broader social process in Oakland; participants have a chance to "get together" and communicate each other. The integrative function of community recreation is based on this simple fact. This function, of course, depends on many kinds of internal and external factors, but community recreation in Oakland offers to take a chance for creating social cohesion.

## 5 The Functions of Staff

(1) The staff structure and their role

Each division of the ORD has its own staff<sup>(7)</sup>. From the functional view point, its staff are divided into four groups: (i) administrators; (ii) full-time recreation directors; (iii) supervisors; and (iv) part-time recreation directors and specialists. These staff are playing each different role, but also playing the interplay each other in the department.

(i) The administrators

The administrators in the ORD have two well-defined groups: commission; and superintendents and their supporters.

(a) A commission of administration

This consists of five laymen who are appointed by the formal city council. These commissioners are usually in close touch with the broader community problems.

(b) The superintendents and their supporters

The superintendents and their administrative members are another important administrators of the ORD. Each superintendent is appointed by the commission and he works as secretary of the commission by the support of his administrative members: to see all appropriate department business presents to the commission; to record all commission decisions and to see the daily operations in the department.

The superintendents are the key administrative staff in the ORD. They are a professionally-trained recreation administrators. So far they were mainly physical educators, but today, the situation has changed. Therefore, they are playing their efforts to broader approach to administration than before.

(ii) The full-time recreation directors

The community recreation staff are expected to have a great variety of experience, educational backgrounds, and professional training in any case. Because recreation is the total activity. However, recreation training programs in the educational system in America, as same as Japanese one, can not provide enough prepare in their curriculum. Therefore, so far, the actual community recreation leaders were mainly physical educators, and social workers who were not professionally trained in the field of recreation.

However, entrance standard to the full-time recreation staff is raising to require a minimum

of a bachelor's degree, preferably in recreation, physical education, and social sciences. These criteria came from its professionalism in order to serve a variety of participant's interests in these years.

(iii) The supervisors

The supervisors in the ORD are composed of the persons who have an experience as the full-time recreation director, and they are taking a role of the "keepers of the professional faith". In order to pursuit their role, they keep conduct with each other constantly and influenced the basic decision-making of the department.

(iv) The part-time directors and specialists

About 70 per cent of the recreation directors are part-time basis in the ORD. Most of the part-time physical recreation directors are college students and school teachers who service about 12 to 18 hours weekly after school-hour and on weekends.

Another group of part-time directors are the specialists in cultural fields.

(2) Group discussion and person-centered programs

The basic style of the decision-making in the ORD is in the discussion with every staff before being put into effect. That is to say, democratic way consists in not only attend everyone into the program, but give a chance to taking everyone into the decision-making. The policy of "administration by group discussion" shows that the staff is a closeknit, highly motivated.

Staff meeting discuss the problems of training, program planning, and its evaluation and so forth. In the process of the discussion, program evaluation is based on "person-centered". The Activities Manual of the department states the following:

The program should be person-centered and should meet the specific needs of individuals and groups.

This means that the ORD's recreation approach is based on the between a traditional recreation approach and a social welfare approach. That is to say, the ORD is standing on the base of person-centered approach. Needless to say, the recreation service should be foreward expanding, creating new ideas, discovering participant's needs, exposing participant to new experience, and a making a full and good life. In order to realize this kind of open-ended recreational functions, the ORD is emphasis on person-centered program. This means "flexibility" and "balance" in program. Therefore, the staff job is to get people to come, to experience, and to grow themselves.

(3) The staff-participant relationships

To realize the functions of the ORD, all staff are attending the training program by the Personnel Division.

All full-time recreation staff have to began to attend the extensive orientation program and an intensive year-round training program, consisting of seminars, workshops, and noted guest speakers. The part-time staff are, also, programmed to attend some training courses.

## 6 The Participant as a Factor of Pursuiting the Functions

(1) The structure and control of participants

We can see that recreational facilities and programs in Oakland are using by four-type participant group: the self-organized group; the director organized group; the self-sustaining group; and the “unorganized” group.

According to the attendance figures for the categories listed of the ORD’s activities, school students attend most sharply, and most attractive program is Special Events, Cultural Arts, and Pools.

One of the most important problems in community recreation is to develop and to maintain a stable and substantial clientele. Generally speaking, every group has the unusual behavior that tends to be disruptive. In this sense, as we cited, community recreation in Oakland has a controlled environment. But, this kind of control is not only closeley related to recreation field, but also nature of a democratic society itself.

For this problem, the ORD has developed general rules: they are based on the municipal code and cover violations. However, in the case of serious violations, there are two alternatives: to require the participant to leave out; and to call the police, if needed.

#### (2) The staff-participant relationships

The ORD, as we considered, has been services for a wide varieties of citizen’s needs. Therefore, the department has different types of relationship with participant.

First of all, strong direction shows at the elementary school level by staff. This type is composed of part-time college students and school teachers who are employed by the department.

Next, one of the most important recreation level is 23 community recreation centers in Oakland. These centers have each full-time professional staff. In these fields, staff are playing the role of advisory, and are expected to search out participant’s needs and realize these ones.

Finally, the adult level of community recreation program is most identifiable. The ORD supports many kinds of adult recreation program. Especially, the golf course and senior citizen clubs are typical one.

Above three levels of staff-participant relationship show two conclusions: (a) adult can perform by themselves their needs than the others; and (b) staff-participant relationships are not big change in the different kinds of participant level.

#### (3) Operating policies relating to participants in the ORD

Main operating policies relating to participants reflected in the following four departmental policies.

First, the ORD is based on grass roots participation in program planning. Program participants, the public (citizen groups), the professional staff and municipal-governing bodies should all share in the development of a recreation program according to the traditional community recreation stand. When this is accomplished, all programs can be reflect the needs of each participant. That is to say, we can say that this kind of approach is democratic procedures. The Activities Manual of the ORD is based on this approach. Therefore, the ORD invites some participants to the decision-making meeting with staff, citizen groups, and governing board.

Second, needless to say, all community recreation participants have, at least should have,

complete freedom of choice in program participation and its selection.

The policy of “free choice” has led an extensive and varied program. This policy is based on the fact that every individual and group has tremendously interests and needs. Of course, there are limited because of staff themselves, time, money, and so forth.

Third, the ORD, as we already considered, is paying its effort for a balance and flexibility in program. This effort is intended to be balanced, serve for all.

Fourth, it is true that even though every participant should be free choice, he has to face some sociological problems such as race, creed, or religion. In the United States, these are more difficult problems than Japan. This is the reason why she is composed of variety ethnic groups.

## 7 The cooperation with other Agencies

### (1) The cooperation with organized citizen groups

The ORD is pursuing its function under an active role of many organized groups in the community. Organized citizen groups which has closely cooperates are as follows: PTA; church groups; neighborhood improvement clubs; service clubs such as Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions; merchants associations; councils (Councils of Social Planning, District Community Councils); and so forth.

From these cooperations, we can point out that the ORD is committed to an active policy of cooperation with organized citizen groups in the community. The ORD wants to cooperate with many organized citizen groups as possible. These groups, as we cited, are making their influences in the decision-making process in the department. Moreover, it is important to note that these cooperations help to create the community integration. In order to secure these cooperations, the ORD has many community recreation centers in its community.

### (2) The cooperation with private agencies

There are some private recreational agencies which have closely cooperation with the ORD. They are: the Junior Center of Art and Science, Inc.; the East Bay Children's Theatre; and many kinds of physical recreation clubs such as swimming club, gymnasium, oriental sports instructions; and cultural clubs.

Even though the department feels limitations of cooperation with them, the staff are paying their effort to continue it. In these cooperations, the Junior Center programs are planned to attract every child interested in the cultural arts and sciences in city-wide. In contrast, many kinds of physical recreation clubs tend to serve community neighborhood level.

### (3) The cooperation with municipal governmental agencies

The ORD has closely cooperation with two governmental agencies: public schools and law enforcement agencies.

First, the cooperation with public schools has long history in the department<sup>(8)</sup>. It was recognized by the department since its early days (1911). Public schools have the facilities such as playground, swimming pools, gymnasiums. Moreover, they have many participants school children — needed by the department.

This kind of cooperation is required by schools, too. Because, they need it from the

educational view point.

Long time, however, needed before this kind of cooperation between the department and public schools realized<sup>(9)</sup>.

Second, to realize the recreation project, the law enforcement agencies which is shown page 2 are needed for the department. The ORD has a necessary for support by the law enforcement agencies against increasing numbers of pre-delinquent and delinquent individuals and groups. We have to point out more strictly the law enforcement on this point than Japan.

This kind of cooperation is, however, basically not good for the sake of community recreation itself, but the ORD had to develop closer relations with the law enforcement agencies since its history had begun. The police is increasingly performing an important role in recreational field in Oakland. It comes from her complex population characteristics; many kinds of difficult problem are occurred to the community.

The close cooperation with other agencies is a major concern of the ORD. The ORD's functions are most sharply realizing through the interaction between the staff and these agencies.

## 8 Conclusion

The ORD, as we are led to understand from the aforementioned indications, is playing its own functions. This comes from its social-historical backgrounds.

These functions of the ORD, as same as its organization, have been acquired the national high reputation in the United States since its history had begun in 1907<sup>(10)</sup>.

In the process to pursuit its own functions, the ORD has several difficult problems: financial, racial, administrative problem, and so forth. These are based on the problem of agreement on recreation goals, voluntary nature of community recreation, marginal status of community recreation. In spite of these difficult situations, it is true that the ORD is taking up a positive attitude.

## Note

- (1) The California Room, at the Oakland Main Library, has 36 volumes of the Oakland Tribune's articles which was described on the ORD since 1890's.
- (2) I have no words to thank these advisors. They helped me to gather the formal/informal data and discuss, and especially Mrs. Jane E. McGuire helped me to edit this monograph.
- (3) Adams E. Francis, Oakland's Early History, (the publisher is unknown), 1932.
- (4) Polk's Oakland (Alameda County, Calif.) City Directory, R. L. Polk & Co., 1967
- (5) Kengo Fujiwara, op. cit.
- (6) Kengo Fujiwara, op. cit.
- (7) Kengo Fujiwara, A Study of the Main Factors that Influenced the Oakland, California, Recreation Department.
- (8) Kengo Fujiwara, op. cit.
- (9) Kengo Fujiwara, op. cit.

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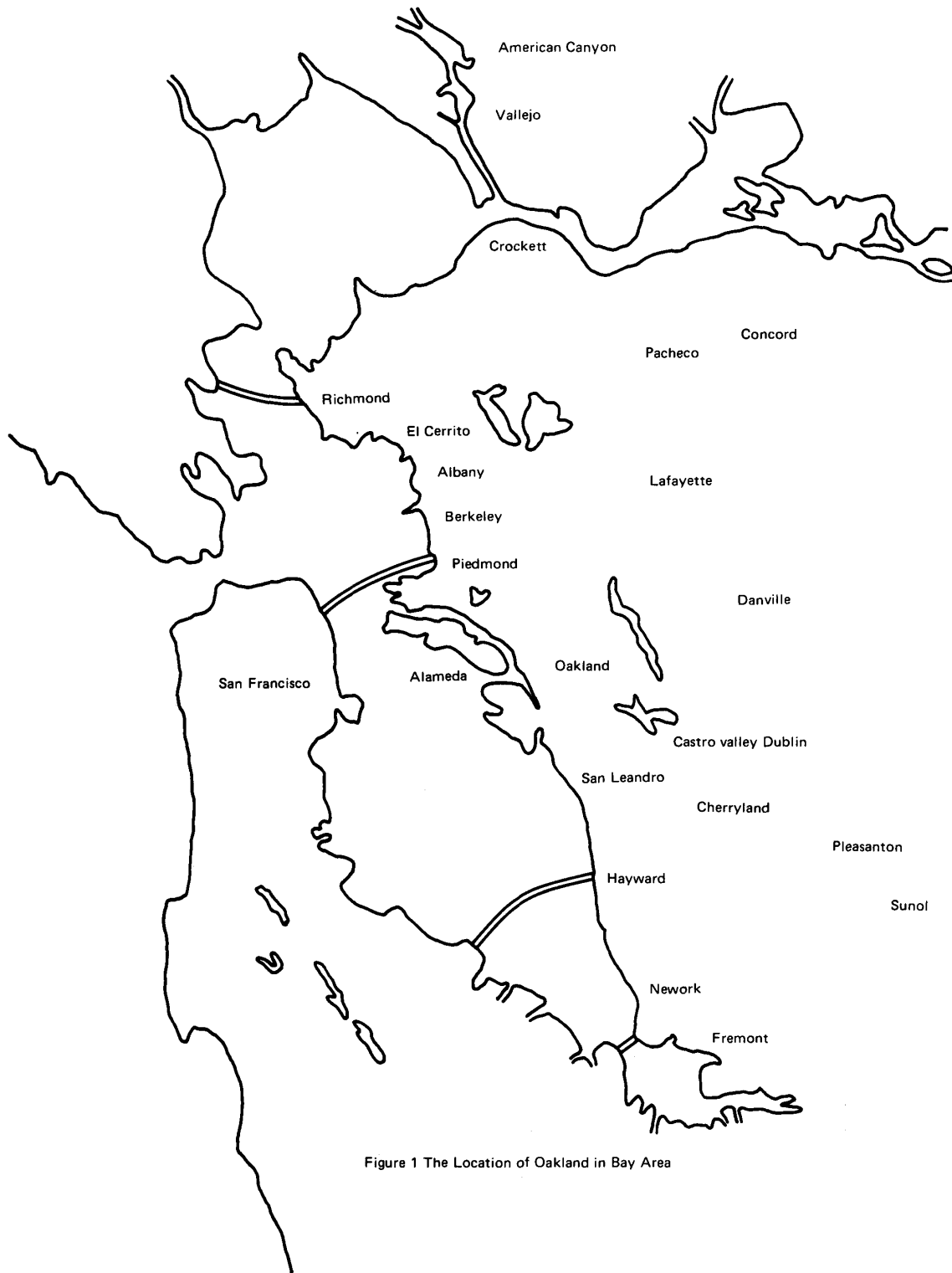


Figure 1 The Location of Oakland in Bay Area